

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE YEAR'S SUICIDES.

There is a Spanish proverb which says there is a remedy for everything but death; and in spite of all the teachings of philosophy and religion, the universal feeling of the European civilization accepts dissolution as the one irremediable misfortune. We speak of our own civilization; because the love of life and the dread of death are greater among the races to which the Christian religion has given a weighty sense of personal responsibility, than among those traditions and fancies, have made all the incidents of living and dying a matter of comparative unimportance. The Japanese gentleman resents an affront by ripping up his own bowels, and his discursive adversary must follow the chivalrous example or be held a boor and a craven. In some provinces of China a man condemned to death can buy a substitute for a few hundred dollars. The vicarious convict makes his wife and children comfortable for life, and then proceeds to indulge in a protracted orgie of rum and opium, at the end of which the executioner's sword strikes the head-ache of the troubles of life and homekeeping are ended. But this indicates a triumphant exercise of what the Germans call pure reason, above the reach of the Caucasian intellect. A man's life may be very worthless, but he will not sell it for money. He still says, in excuse for any meanness, "A man must live," and Dr. Johnson, M. de Talleyrand, Didaskalos Tis, and all the wise and sage since jest-books were written, may reply in vain, "I do not see the necessity." The gloomy wisdom of Solon's warning to the Lydian King—to count no man happy until his death—is usually reversed in the sanguine instincts of average human hearts, which persistently refuse to despair this side of the undiscovered country.

The report of the Coroner gives some hint, therefore, of the utter wretchedness which exists unknown at our very elbows, when it informs us that in this, the most practical and prosperous of all the world's great cities, during the year just finished, 112 persons found the miseries of life more dreadful than death, and laid violent hands on their own existence. Of these, only 23 were natives of the United States—the element of hope is stronger in the Yankee than any other creature. Beer, metaphysics, and home-sickness give to the Teutonic immigrant a predisposition to self-slaughter, increased by indiscreet reading of Werther and the Robbers. The German suicides reach the disproportionate number of 53. The Irish are relatively much less numerous. Many of them would seem to have little to live for, and yet only 15 have thought best to die. Of the French, who at home have such a passion for charcoal and the Seine, only three chose to run the ordeal of an alien Morgue. As might naturally be expected, the very young people have not been eager to leave a world where there was kissing and dancing. Under twenty years of age there was but one solitary unfortunate; under thirty there were 26; under forty there were 31 that grew tired of the hard fight; under fifty, 27; there were 16 under sixty and 10 under seventy, and one who had finished the allotted limit of men grew impatient and courted his dallying death. The suicides were pretty evenly distributed through the year. January was the month most affected by the self-slayers, and in March there were fewest. This is natural enough, as winter is the time of cheer to the wretched, and hope wakes in every heart where it slept at the first vivifying touch of spring.

Either because they suffer less, or endure suffering better than men, comparatively few women commit suicide. Last year the proportion was 23 to 89. There is a curious and characteristic difference in the manner in which the two sexes make way with their lives. The largest number of men shoot or hang themselves; but only five women used the ungraceful rope, and not one had the courage to load and fire a pistol. Most of them took poison, as midwinter is the time of a picturesque and heart-broken attitude. Four, who had possibly read Hood and seen Hamlet, sought a watery grave, which they would not have done if they had ever seen a drowned person. A blonde Bavarian girl came before the Coroner a few days ago and said:—"My lover and I agreed to die together while we were young and loving. He brought two pistols and shot himself, and I was afraid." If this Romeo of the Bowery had brought a phial of prussic acid, his Juliet would have gone unflinchingly with him into the Silent Land.

The predominance of foreigners in all such lists shows that nostalgia is the most fruitful cause of that utter despair which makes life hateful. A condition of misery among strangers is worse than financial ruin, or disgrace, or despised love. In the early days of the coolie emigration, the contractors on the isthmus of Panama frequently found their working gangs seriously reduced by suicide. The unhappy bondmen would go through some religious ceremonial, and then, donning a melancholy hymn, they would clasp hands and lie down in platoons on their faces in the warm and dry sand, and never move again. This they imagined was the easiest way to get home.

ARE THE REPUBLICANS SHUT OUT TO THE RENOMINATION OF GRANT?

Hostility to the renomination of General Grant permeates the Republican party to a far greater extent than is dreamed of by some of its leaders. His administration having demonstrated that he is neither a statesman of broad views nor a politician of even ordinary shrewdness, the rank and file of the party, who do not seek office and have no corrupt jobs to promote, are earnest in the conviction that the campaign of 1872 ought not to be embarrassed by the dead weight of General Grant's blunders and incapacities. In 1868 hundreds of thousands of men voted for General Grant simply to close up the work of reconstruction. They did not expect much from him beyond this, and they are not seriously disappointed at finding him on the completion of this work a calamitous failure. They are not exactly dissatisfied with his course on the measures growing out of the war, but they have no confidence in his ability to mark out a policy for the future; and, in plain English, they wish to get rid of him at the close of his present term.

It is absurd to say that the Republicans cannot easily find an acceptable candidate for 1872. The great events of the last ten years, in which their organization has borne a leading part, have brought into the foreground many able and ambitious men, none of whom

would decline to carry the Republican standard in the campaign upon which the country is now entering, while some of them are already grasping to get hold of it. Conspicuous among the possible candidates for the East stand Mr. Sumner and Mr. Boutwell; and at the West, Mr. Morton and Mr. Trumbull. Less prominent than these we discover Mr. Banks and Mr. Fenton on this side of the Alleghenies, and over the mountains Mr. Logan and Mr. Colfax rise to view; and General Butler is eagerly pushing, and Senator Sherman is quietly waiting, and poor Mr. Greeley is entirely willing.

Outside a strict party line, and occupying independent grounds, but still claiming to rank as Republicans, we may note B. Gratz Brown and Charles Francis Adams; and, even in spite of his precarious health, we presume Chief Justice Chase's friends do not abandon all hopes of his reaching the Presidency.

THE SAN DOMINGO COMMISSION.

Mr. Greeley's visit to Washington by invitation of General Grant, and his conferences with the President, have filled the air with surmises that Grant is courting his support by offering him a place on the commission. His support the President would have in any event, as Mr. Greeley is known to favor annexation; but General Grant wants his zeal. He desires the thick-and-thin advocacy of the Tribune for his darling project. He hopes, by playing upon Mr. Greeley's vanity and feeding his self-importance, to detach the Tribune from Sumner, and to throw its active influence into the other scale. This may be a cunning maneuver; but a commission selected on such principles will not secure the confidence of the country in the fairness of its investigations.

Mr. Greeley is, by nature, habit, and the training of his whole life, a partisan and not a judge. It would not be easy to find another man of so much ability who is so deficient in the coolness, fairness, and impartiality requisite for forming just opinions on a new and exciting question. There is not a more vehement or a more wayward partisan in the country. He never sees but one side of a debated question, and is utterly blind to the force of evidence which conflicts with his preconceived opinions. If he accepts a place on the commission he will go to San Domingo with his mind already made up, and he will be obstinately blind to facts which ought to shake his forgone conclusions. Of course, any investigation conducted by men of his stamp will be utterly worthless. If he goes, he will not go in search of information, but of materials to make out a case. If General Grant makes up a commission of such men, it will be like trying a case before a packed or bribed jury.

As the proposed inquiry is solely for the information of Congress, that body, if it thinks the investigation necessary, ought to appoint a committee of its own members, as it does in other matters wherein it seeks information. The custom is, in making up committees of investigation, to compose them by an intermixture of members favorable and members opposed to the project in contemplation, in order that there may be a proper sifting of the evidence. It is absurd to allow the President to pack a commission the object of whose labor is to acquire information to guide the action of Congress. Either he may properly act as President for the fact, and demand on which he has formed his own opinion and made his recommendation; or if Congress needs the need of more information than these supply, it can appoint a committee of its own of whose capacity it can judge by its acquaintance with the men. The President will of course pack a commission known to favor his own views, and therefore certain to furnish a one-sided account.

We fear there is little room to doubt that the Senate resolution, to be called up next Monday by General Banks, will pass the House. If the President had confidence in the result of a fair investigation, he would appoint an unbiased commission. But if he suspects three men like Mr. Greeley, ignorant of the Spanish language and committed to his project, and gives them the versatile Caleb Cushing for a secretary, Mr. Cushing will be the commission, and its members his subservient dummies. As they can hold no intercourse with inhabitants except through him, he will select whom he pleases for examination, and take good care to select nobody but accomplices of Baez. He will of necessity ask all the questions, and translate the answers; and he is adroit and skillful enough to bring forward such men and give such a turn to their evidence as to make any impression he pleases on a set of commissioners who can hear only with his ears and speak only with his tongue.

There is no need of sending a commission to San Domingo to learn its topography, climate, and statistics, since these are recorded in easily accessible publications, with greater fulness and accuracy than a commission could attain during a brief visit to the island. Their chief labor will consist in the examination of individual residents, and the whole investigation will be a misleading sham unless they are selected from opponents as well as friends of annexation, comprising persons of intelligence and wide connections among their fellow-inhabitants. Mr. Cushing would be an invaluable member of such a commission; but he ought to be matched by another equally skillful and knowing, and equally acquainted with the language, with exactly opposite prepossessions. A commission would not be badly composed if it consisted of two such men, with the third of a judicial turn and sufficient weight of character to steady the others. The commission would then resemble two opposing lawyers and a judge. The advocates would take care that the right witnesses were called to bring out all the information on either side, and their conflicting zeal would be tempered by the third member of the commission. Of course Mr. Greeley could play neither of these parts. He has not the linguistic and other special knowledge requisite for the one, nor the judicial equisipose which would fit him for the other. But if, as is undoubtedly the case, General Grant intends to pack a commission to make out a case and reflect his own views, it is of little consequence whom he appoints.

TRUE AND FALSE REPUBLICANS.

It must be tolerably clear to all Republicans who take an interest in public affairs that these are not the times for encouraging any elements of discord or weakness within

the party. We are beset on every side by active and vigilant enemies. The absence of any one absorbing question which might form the ground of an appeal to the public at large is an advantage to the party which always depends for success upon evasion and side issues. The President has been subjected to an uninterrupted course of attack from the Democratic journals—in the first place because he is trying to do his duty, and in the next, because he systematically declines to "dicker" with Democratic politicians. No one can refute the facts that General Grant has kept his pledges to the people, and that his policy has been generally advantageous to the country at large. But in "off years" the attempt was sure to be made to disparage all his exertions and misrepresent all his acts. Whenever the question is fairly tested, it will be found that the people have undiminished confidence in the President; but this conviction ought not to lead to any supineness on the part of the Republican party. It is possible for the best of causes to suffer through the negligence of those who have the management of them, and this danger can never be absent from a party which appeals rather to principles and reason than to ignorance and demagoguery.

No small part of the burden of the next great fight will necessarily fall upon the Republicans of this State, and it is quite time that they began to organize their forces, and place themselves in the highest state of efficiency for the struggle. In this city we have not only to be prepared for avowed enemies, but, what is still worse, for foes who are actually within our own camp. The folly of some, and the jealousy of others, have done much to weaken the party, as they must have seen from the results of the recent election. An organization like that of the Citizens' Association, under the nominal management of a well-meaning but weak man like Mr. Peter Cooper, and the real control of an active and unscrupulous agent of the ring like Mr. Nathaniel Sands, is a power capable of producing serious mischief. Until these malignant agencies are finally disposed of, no efforts of Republican leaders can bring out the true strength of the party. A still more dangerous element is at work. The men who wear the cloaks of Republicans, while concealing the weapons of the Democrats beneath them, are determined to do all in their power to destroy the administration, and with it every cause with which the public interest is really identified. To-night these Tammany Republicans are to meet for the purpose of rendering their forces as compact as possible. They are to hold the first regular meeting of the new committee. It is important that every Republican should understand that in proportion to the countenance or support he gives to this clique, he injures the party he is anxious to aid, and he endangers the rank and file of the party. The Hank Smith banner had better take one step more at once and go over to the Tweedites. Hank Smith and his friends have been allowed to do quite harm enough. No matter with whom they are associated, they are in reality working for the Democrats, and all their propositions should be rejected as decisively as if they were dictated at a convention of pickpockets, like those who stole Mr. Samuel Tilden's watch at Rochester.

If ever there was a period at which it was all-important to distinguish accurately our friends from our foes, it is the one in which we live. Great issues are being fought for, and the public are gradually becoming alive to their reality and importance. We see a gang of thieves—it would be absurd flattery to call them by any other name—ruling absolutely in this city, corrupting the bar, the bench, and the press, and choking every avenue to public life. They boast of their power to extend their rule all over the State, and then to seize the National Government, and work from the White House as they have worked from the City Hall. Their ambition is to reconstruct the Government of the United States on the model of that which we now see in this city. Some people do not believe it; others profess to feel indifferent as to whether they succeed or not. But the main body of the people still take a very lively interest in the cause of good government and honest officials, and this is an element of strength with which Republicans alone can deal, for the Democrats are sacrificing all right to appeal to it. Whatever may be the amount of apathy existing now, and however much we may deplore it, we may be very sure that the good cause will in the end prevail, and with proper management we can render its success assured at the very next contest. But there must be sincerity of purpose, great address and tact, and an unflinching belief in our own side, on the part of our leaders. We look to the State Committee to sever all connection with Tammany—to reorganize the party in such a way as that the Republicans and Democrats will stand face to face, and not side by side. In this work the committee is now engaged, and people who are disposed to help it will keep away from the Hank Smith organization. It may take time to cut away the bad timber; the party has been allowed to get into such a bad state that a few weeks will scarcely suffice to put it in proper fighting order again. But the task can be accomplished, and the first step necessary is to draw the fence of the Tammany Republicans. When that is done, we need have no fear concerning the plots now being concocted by the Democrats to bring final ruin upon the Republican party in the State.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTION OF THE PUBLIC DEBT.

From the N. Y. Herald. On September 1, 1865, the public debt of the United States was \$2,757,689,571. This was the largest amount of debt the nation ever owed. It had been accumulating vastly during the four years' war, which closed in the spring of 1865. For the first few months after the close of the war—that is, from April to September—a large amount of floating indebtedness had to be adjusted, and it was this that brought the debt up to the highest figure in September. But from that time it began to waste away. It has been steadily and regularly decreasing since. On January 3, 1871, the debt was \$2,349,664,320. This is the lowest point it has reached since September, 1865. Thus, then, there has been paid in the course of five years and four months \$408,025,251.

During Johnson's administration, or, rather, during the three years and six months of his administration from the time the debt was adjusted and reached the highest figure, there was paid \$212,652,667. Since General Grant has been President, or during one year and ten months, there has been paid \$195,372,584. It must be remembered, however, that the claims upon the Treasury arising out of the war, for the first two or three years after it ended, were numerous and large. Many of these were settled before General Grant entered the White House. Indeed, the amount of the claims and expenses of the Government growing out of the war have been less every year for several

years past, and will continue to diminish henceforward. Even the war pensions will fall off every year.

The amount of money the people of this country have contributed to the support of the Government and payment of the debt in the last ten years is stupendous. The contributions in the shape of taxes, in one way or another, have averaged probably over four hundred millions a year for the last ten years, or, in the aggregate, between four and five thousand millions. Yes, the people have paid from the earnings of their industry in the short period of ten years a sum more than double the amount of the present interest-bearing debt—a sum far larger than that raised from the nation during the previous eighty years and upwards of its history. Did ever a nation show such extraordinary resources before? Was there ever known more marvelous elasticity in the financial capabilities of a country?

But that is not all. This stupendous taxation was borne at the time when millions of men were taken away from industrial pursuits for the armies, and when thousands of millions of property was destroyed by the war. The productive South was almost turned into a wilderness, and all the efforts of the North were strained to an unparalleled extent to carry on the gigantic struggle. It took several years to restore industry, and though the country generally, and the South especially, have arisen from their prostrate condition in an astonishing manner, the effects of the war are still felt. It will take some time to restore the vast wealth that was destroyed.

Now the question is, Ought the people who have paid so much for the preservation of the Union in ten years, and when thousands have been and lost so much blood and property, to be still heavily taxed to pay the balance of the debt? Ought not our children, ought not posterity, to pay a portion of the debt? There is no longer any question, if there ever was, as to the ability and purpose of the republic to pay. We need not raise a large revenue and keep paying off the debt at the rate of a hundred millions a year to establish the credit of the Government. Then, as wealth and population increase, the people will feel less and less of the debt. With the surprising development of ten years and population the people in ten years will be able to bear a hundred millions of taxes better than we can now fifty millions. A small sinking fund, to keep the debt constantly decreasing, is all that is needed at present. The revenue can be cut down a hundred millions a year, and then there will be left an ample amount for the current expenses of an economical government and for a sinking fund. This sum left in the hands of the people would be applied to industry, would stimulate production and add vastly to the national wealth. Instead of being anxious to pay the debt in a hurry, as the Secretary of the Treasury is, the taxes ought to be reduced to the lowest amount possible. That would be national economy and the proper course for a wise government to pursue.

INSURANCE COMPANY OF NORTH AMERICA. JANUARY 1, 1870. CAPITAL \$500,000. ASSETS \$1,788,581. Losses paid since organization \$28,000,000. Receipts of Premiums, 1869 \$1,991,337.45. Interest from Investments, 1869 \$1,144,996.74. Losses paid, 1869 \$2,106,634.19. STATEMENT OF THE ASSETS. First Mortgages on City Property \$760,400. United States Government and other Bonds 1,129,916. Railroad, Bank and Canal Stocks 55,705. Cash in Bank and Office 241,690. Loans on Collateral Security 82,508. Notes Receivable, mostly Marine Premiums 331,944. Accrued Interest on Bonds 144,969.23. Premiums in course of transmission 30,382. Unsettled Marine Premiums 100,000. Real Estate, Office of Company, Philadelphia \$1,000,000. \$1,788,581.

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